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Situational Irony in "The Lottery" – CORRECTED

In "The Lottery," by Shirley Jackson, the author uses situational irony to make a larger impact on the reader. Situational irony, as defined by Dictionary.com, is "irony involving a situation in which actions have an effect that is opposite from what was intended, so that the outcome is contrary to what was expected." In other words, the story very well seems that it will go one way, but later the reader is shocked to find out that something totally different occurred; or, in a similar situation, there's a contradiction of thoughts. A popular and easily understood example of situational irony is when a fire station burns down. One would expect it to be the safest place from fire, but the tragedy just so happened that way — no explanation provided.

This effect was used in this short story several times. For example, the whole story is about the drawing of the lottery, which we would consider today as a happy event. However, in direct contrast, the winner of *this* village's lottery is most unfortunate — he/she is violently stoned to death. And *this* is why, as it states, "Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example, selecting the smoothest and roundest stones" (Jackson 1). Moreover, the stoning ceremony is (probably) done as a sacrifice, to atone for the community's sins. Yet this in itself is a paradox: For what good does it do to rid of sins by committing more sins? The world may never know. Another instance of situational irony in the story is the fact that the person who conducts the *evil* lottery is given a *cheerful* name — Mr. Summers, that is. In addition to this, the author takes unnecessary measures to point out that "People were sorry for him [Summers] because he had no children and his wife was a scold" (Jackson 1). This diverts even more from the reader's high expectations for someone with such an uplifting name.

All in all, situational irony is a good way to make an impression on the reader, and was used very effectively by Shirley Jackson in "The Lottery."